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Form meets function: Red Bull's offices, with Astroturf, 'rock' pillows and bright rugs, left and bottom, and Elwood Clothing's exposed lighting design, below



NEWS

INTERIOR MOTIVES

As elaborate corporate designs give way to a starker look, the aim is still to create productive and welcoming workplaces.

Report Jeanne-Vida Douglas

It's official: the wave of fuss and clutter embodied by the intricate floral designs of Florence Broadhurst wallpaper and 1970s revival furnishings has been replaced by uncovered light bulbs, raw surfaces and deceptively simple designs that have featured prominently on the shortlist for this year's Interior Design Awards Australia.

The same goes for office spaces. The office design entrants for 2009 are creating comfortable spaces with raw timber and concrete surfaces set off with quirky colourful touches such as Astroturf and bright rugs, past winner and jury chairwoman for the corporate interior design award, Domino Risch, says.

"The creative work on these designs dates back more than 18 months so the focus on a more simple aesthetic is not a response to the financial crisis," Risch says. "While it's not extravagant like in past years, it can still be quite expensive



Take the stairs: AXA Asia-Pacific headquarters in Melbourne

to make a simple but elegant design that fits the client and the space."

This year's shortlist reflects an increasing corporate awareness of the influence of design on productivity and wellbeing in the workplace.

"There's a recognition that the workplace has more to offer staff than a big pay cheque, and more companies are looking to create an environment where people feel welcome and happy," Risch says. "The creation of good work spaces has become a business strategy to attract and retain productive staff."

Exposed structural elements such as concrete columns and floors are also making their way into other areas, the chairman and judge in the residential and hospitality sections of the awards, Jonathan Richards, says.

"For the past decade or so there's been a universal trend across all categories of design towards a more glamorous decorative style, the hallmarks of which

have been the chandelier and patterned wallpaper," Richards says. "Surfaces were all shimmery and glitzy, and what we're seeing now in the corporate and residential environment with the natural materials and the architectural bones of the structural display is a reaction to the previous aesthetic."

By contrast, the hospitality sector is on the outer edge of design, Richards says, pointing to Sydney's sleek white-enamelled Ivy Bar, which breaks away from rather than follows broader trends.

"While you can see the corporate sector informing the residential sector and the hospitality sector influencing the corporate sector, there's a move in hospitality to be completely original in the way it uses colours and furnishings."

The shortlist for the 2009 Interior Design Awards is available on the Design Institute of Australia website. The winners will be announced in Melbourne on May 1. [BRW](#)

